DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

December 11, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

This records conversation with Mr. McCone at his office on Tuesday, December 10.

After reading my proposed draft directive on consolidation of CORONA management, Mr. McCone said, "This is the same paper you presented before. You want to take the whole project over." He then went on to say that he had looked into the history of this project and that he was convinced that had it not been for CIA influence this country would still today be without pictures of the Soviet Union. He illustrated the importance of these pictures by citing his recent ~~research~~ review of the NIE for the National Security Council. He stated that he would not stand for submersion of this project into the bureaucracy of the Air Force and that he would liquidate the NRO if necessary to prevent this. He spoke of the necessity to keep the imagination, inventiveness, enthusiasm and flexibility of the CIA organization at work on this project in order to insure its success.

I pointed out to him that at the present time none of the CIA people that originally worked on the CORONA project were contributing effectively to it, noting that at present one contracting officer at Langley administer[redacted] worth of contracts out of a total approaching [redacted] that this contracting officer takes technical [redacted] only from the Configuration Control Board and that the CIA has two members on this CCB. Mr. McCone then stated that he would consider the paper further.

He asked about TAGBOARD, and I reported that I had asked Colonel Geary to prepare for me a complete review of the program and its expected costs and stated that I felt that we might come to a decision to terminate soon.

He asked what we were doing to achieve higher resolution in our satellite photography, and I reported briefly on the latest reports from the [redacted]roject. He expressed great interest and stated tha[redacted]ght it was important to pursue this kind of objective.

He asked what the possibilities were for a new general search system. I described the history of the E-6 system and what I knew of the proposed M-2 system. I explained the "political" factors that will be felt in making any decision in this area and stated as my present judgment, not held with great confidence, that the quickest way to get an improved general search system would be to revive E-6 with improvements, and that I thought that this had a greater potential than the M-2 proposal. I noted, however, that the present committee studying the resolution of the CORONA system might come to a more definitive conclusion about the possibility of making improvements along the same technical lines.

As the meeting closed, Mr. McCone stated he would let me have his decision on the CORONA matter within a few days.

[redacted]

Brockway McMillan

P.S. He also read to me my letter to Wheelon asking that he not task NRO personnel directly, but to do so through me. He protested this letter. I stated that it had two objectives - to insure that, through me, Wheelon got the best source of information on each subject of interest, and to maintain the principle that NRO personnel work for DNRO, not for their parent agency. Mr. McCone disparaged this letter as a joking way.